Assessment Framework v1.0

University Assessment and Accreditation

05-26-2022
I. Introduction
The purpose of this assessment framework is to establish a baseline of assessment activities that occur at the University of North Texas Health Science Center at Fort Worth (HSC). To create a system in which student learning and administrative effectiveness can be assessed systematically at the university-level to ensure the quality of education and effectiveness of the organization. The framework’s intention is to maintain a level of assessment for accountability while moving the institution to a culture of transformative assessment.

At the core of the HSC Assessment Framework are the organizational purpose, vision, mission, and values – which drive the direction and purpose of assessment.

UNTHSC Purpose
Transform lives in order to improve the lives of others.

UNTHSC Vision
One university, built on values, defining and producing the providers* of the future.

*Providers of research, teaching and health care delivery and public health delivery, working in interprofessional teams drawn from all disciplines

UNTHSC Mission
Create solutions for a healthier community.

UNTHSC Values
a. Serve Others First
b. Integrity
c. Respect
d. Collaboration
e. Be Visionary

University Assessment and Accreditation Mission
To foster a culture of assessment, continuous quality improvement, and evidence-based planning and decision support at HSC, by providing integrated expertise in outcomes assessment, accreditation, and planning & decision support.

University Assessment Committee Mission
The mission of the University Assessment Committee (UAC) is to engage in the assessment of student learning and administrative effectiveness at the university-level. (To be revised at first UAC meeting)

II. Goals and Scope of Assessment at UNTHSC
The Goals of the HSC assessment framework are multipurpose and include:

a. Recognize importance of assessment
b. Improve student learning, satisfaction, and attainment of education outcomes
c. Support achievement of overall programmatic goals including faculty development, scholarly activity, and professional and community service
d. Educate administrators, faculty, and staff on assessment best-practices

e. Engage in intentional, evidence-based improvements

f. Strengthen collective effectiveness of organization

g. Provide evidence to HSC stakeholders

h. Deliver on the promise of our mission, vision, and values

i. Identify administrators, faculty, and staff to engage in formal assessment activities, including oversight of assessment tool development,

j. Identify data collection, storage, and analysis of assessment results

k. Establish dissemination of results to relevant stakeholders

l. Establish appropriate timelines for administration of elements of the Assessment Framework and ensure those timelines are met

The Scope of HSC assessment activities in the framework include:

a. Teaching and learning

b. Research and scholarly activities

c. Service

d. Operational and institutional effectiveness

III. General Assumptions and Principles of Assessment

a. History of Assessment

The concept of assessment is an essential part of instruction as it determines whether or not the goals or objectives of instruction are being met. In the educational setting, it is very important to assess student learning and the institutional performance to assess how well students are learning and how well the institution is performing to support students in the achievement of their educational goals. Overall, the educational assessment community has become aware of the need to embed more valid and complex assessments into the fabric of instruction and operation.

Assessment occurs at multiple levels from the individual student, to the program, to the institution. Ideally, assessment done at the level of the individual student through a classroom assignment, project, or test can be “rolled up” and used at the program and institutional levels to gather information about how the program and the institution are contributing to student learning.

Based on the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems/Kellogg Student Outcomes Project, Peter Ewell proposed that institutions achieve educational excellence by demonstrating changes in educational outcomes consistent with institutional objectives, student educational goals, and the expressed needs of society and specific constituencies. Ewell made an important distinction between the measurement of changes and the values placed on these changes by different groups (students, the college, and special interest groups). Ewell developed a classification of outcomes with four dimensions: knowledge, skills, attitudes/values, and relationships with society.
Ewell cited the experiences of Alverno College and Northeast Missouri State University (NMSU) in recognizing that student learning assessment can improve institutional effectiveness. Alverno College, a pioneer of student learning assessment, committed to integrating instruction, assessment, research, and evaluation. This integration yielded a process that allows both educational improvement and an opportunity to demonstrate to the outside world that education does indeed make a difference. Assessment at NMSU involved three linked activities: value-added assessment of student gains in general education between the freshman and junior years; a standardized test of achievement in the major field, administered at the completion of a student’s program; and assessing student opinion using several standardized attitudinal instruments administered at different points in the student’s career. The NMSU assessment activities resulted in the ability to make changes in curriculum that improved comparative performance of students and also provided increased appropriations when requests were linked to appropriate student improvement targets.

Ewell also cited the example of University of Tennessee, Knoxville (UTK) that responded to the initiation of performance funding in 1979 by the Tennessee Higher Education Commission (THEC). UTK developed an assessment process that enabled it to develop a comprehensive campus-wide assessment of learning outcomes consistent with the THEC criteria. This proactive response to the initiation of performance funding provided a superb example of how external agencies and central administrations can work together to create a structure of incentives and opportunities for individual faculties to examine critically and improve curriculum and instructional practice.

The National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) was established in 2008 by George Kuh and Stan Ikenberry in response to the 2006 Spellings Commission Report. The report concluded that colleges and universities had little evidence about the quality and impact of their core function, student learning. Many higher education entities responded to the report’s call to document student accomplishment, including the National Association of State Universities and Land Grant Colleges, American Association of State Colleges and Universities, which launched the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA). The American Association of Colleges and Universities and the Council for Higher Education Accreditation issued a statement of guiding principles for assessment and regional accreditors strengthened their expectations that institutions provide evidence of student outcomes. NILOA was founded at this time to enhance awareness and inform understanding of the state-of-the-art of assessment of learning outcomes in U.S. post-secondary education, provide periodic yardsticks of accomplishment, and highlight the shortcomings and additional work still to do.
Noteworthy activities of NILOA since its inception include: 1) development of the Transparency Framework, a template for how to present assessment work in online formats; 2) identification of best practices in academic quality assurance at Consortium for Institutional Cooperation universities; 3) working with regional accreditors to inform the field’s understanding of the role and evolving expectations of regional accreditation; 4) provision of institutional coaching to assist with documenting and encouraging the use of the Degree Qualifications Profile (DQP); 5) development of a library of exemplary assignments from various disciplines and the creation of venues where faculty work together to fine-tune assignments to induce students to demonstrate the desired outcomes (charrettes); 6) becoming a Signature Institute Partner of the Assessment Institute as a means to feature NILOA’s own work and highlight promising assessment efforts of others; and 7) creation of the Emerging Learning System to provide another resource to support the development of assessment in higher education.


b. Why do we assess?

We assess to provide evidence of resources, implementation actions, and outcomes, to improve teaching, learning, co-curricular programs, and services in higher education (Banta & Palomba, 2014). The term assessment has come to be used as an overarching term in higher education, to include all activities designed for quality improvement, including student learning assessment, institutional effectiveness, and administrative effectiveness. Assessment is more than simply measuring and keeping data, it is the process of utilizing collected data as evidence that something is of quality. If deficiencies are measured, such data can be used to make evidence-based changes. The purpose of assessment is two-fold: it improves student outcomes and improves the work done at the university.

The institution should provide and effectively implement support services to meet the needs of students as they progress through three levels of experience: at the point of entry, during their time of enrollment, and after graduation (Souza and Rose, p. 275.)

Three questions should guide the self-study process (Souza and Rose, p. 267):

1. Do we have it?
2. Do we use it?
3. Does it work? (This question should be drilled down on to ensure: “Does it work for all?” (Souza and Rose, p. 273.)

The institution should differentiate between Assessment 1.0 and Assessment 2.0 as coined by Metzler and Kurz (Souza and Rose, p. 198):
Assessment 1.0 is the standard, linear, accreditation-motivated assessment process employed by many institutions across the nation: write outcomes, align outcomes, design student assignment, assess student work, report on assessment, and then make changes in response. (Components 1 to 4 below)

Assessment 2.0 focuses on assessment methods and questions that are meaningful for those who will be conducting the assessment and are diverse assessments designed to answer specific questions that in some cases might even be one-offs never to be repeated. The focus is on assessment for learning as opposed to assessment of learning. (Item 5 below)

Faculty and staff should receive professional development in institutional assessment processes:
- Outcomes and assessment methods should be established for assessment training
- Consider providing microcredentials or badges to those who complete the professional development in assessment processes

Components of an effective assessment system for all units should include:
1. Unit mission
2. Desired unit competencies/outcomes linked to courses (academic units) or processes (co-curricular or operational units), and assessment method(s)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Competency/Outcome</th>
<th>Course/Process</th>
<th>Assessment</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Academic</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Apply epidemiologic methods to the breadth of settings and situations in public health practice</td>
<td>Epidemiology</td>
<td>Three multipart quiz questions calculating prevalence, mortality rate, and risk ratios for public health issues across three different settings</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Co-Curricular</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Demonstrate abilities to improve well-being in one or more of the following domains: career, social, financial, physical health, mental health, and community</td>
<td>Book club, Fitness class/event, Financial workshop/seminar, Career expo/workshop, Wellbeing seminar</td>
<td>Self-assessment reflection, Pre/post knowledge quiz, Student-defined action plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Operations</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty and staff well-being in one or more of the following domains: career, social, financial, physical</td>
<td>Services, Seminars, Training</td>
<td>Annual well-being surveys, Point of service surveys, Pre/post knowledge quiz</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Competency/Outcome | Course/Process | Assessment
---|---|---
health, mental health, and community | | |

3. Competency/Outcome mapping  
Academic programs should map outcomes to courses. Co-curricular and operational units should map outcomes to processes. (Note that Nuventive Improve supports course mapping for any academic programs in need of a course mapping tool and outcome mapping for co-curricular and operational units could be documented in Nuventive Improve as well.)

4. Outcomes assessment  
All units should assess outcomes on a continuous basis.

5. Continuous Quality Improvement (Assessment 2.0)  
Continuous improvement can include OKRs, Lean improvement projects, or any other process improvement that incorporates the Plan-Do-Study-Act framework. Opportunities for continuous improvement can be based on results of institutional/unit surveys (Gallup, Cultural Climate, Student Satisfaction, constituent satisfaction, etc.) focus group summaries, analysis of student learning outcomes, unit performance outcomes, etc. Continuous improvement for all units can also be documented in Nuventive Improve.

c. The Assessment Process can be categorized as Plan – Do – Study – Act and follow Linda Suskie’s Four-Step Teaching-Learning-Assessment Process (Suskie, Assessing Student Learning, 3rd Edition):  
1. Establish clear, observable expected goals for student learning  
2. Ensure the students have sufficient opportunities to achieve those goals  
3. Systematically gather, analyze, and interpret evidence of how well student learning meets those goals  
4. Use the resulting information to understand and improve student learning

d. To be effective, Suskie recommends institutions create a Culture of Assessment by following a six-step process (Suskie, Assessing Student Learning, 3rd Edition):  
1. Make assessment useful and used  
2. Value great teaching  
3. Value innovation, especially in improving teaching  
4. Value and honor assessment efforts in tangible ways  
5. Respect everyone and what they have been doing  
6. Active commitment to assessment by university leadership

e. Holistic Learning  

f. Inclusive Assessment
i. Clear guidelines should be provided to students on how they will be assessed.

ii. Grading policies must be clear to all students.

iii. Students must easily be able to understand what they should be learning in the curriculum/co-curriculum from the student learning outcomes.

iv. Students must have access to all assignments.

v. Assessments created only from content delivered in curriculum/co-curriculum.

vi. Assessments should not require prior learning.

vii. Assessments must utilize multiple and varied methods to assess student performance.

viii. Students must have multiple opportunities to be assessed.

ix. Students should receive timely feedback on all assessments.

Assessment can, and should occur at multiple levels of the institution (Suskie, Assessing Student Learning, 3rd Edition):

1. Assessing Students
   Student-level assessment assesses how well student have achieved course learning goals through tests, quizzes, and assignments.

2. Assessing Classes
   Class-level assessment assesses how well an entire course section or class of students has achieved course learning goals. Its primary purpose is to enable the faculty member to reflect on and improve student learning in that class and/or in subsequent offerings of the same class.

3. Assessing Courses
   Course-level assessment assesses how well all students in a multi-section course have achieved course learning goals. Its primary purpose is to enable the faculty teaching those sections to collaboratively reflect on and improve student learning.

4. Assessing Programs
   Program-level assessment looks at how well all students in a program have achieved program-level learning goals. At the program level, there should be alignment between curriculum and SLOs. According to Miller and Leskes, the assessment of programs mostly requires the implementation of summative assessments that address the following six questions:
   
   i. Do the program’s courses, individually and collectively, contribute to its outcomes as planned?

   ii. How well does the program fulfill its purposes in the entire curriculum?

   iii. How well do the program’s sub-categories contribute to the overall purposes?

   iv. Does the program’s design resonate with its expected outcomes?

   v. Are the courses organized in a coherent manner to allow for cumulative learning?

   vi. Does the program advance institution-wide goals as planned?
5. Assessing the Institution
Assessment of institutional learning goals looks at how well students have achieved college-wide learning goals in settings beyond general education

IV. Institutional Level Assessment
a. Career Readiness Outcomes
i. Communication
1. Able to articulate thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively in written and verbal communications.
2. Confident public speaking skills, able to express ideas to others, and can write/edit memos, letters, and complex reports clearly and effectively.

ii. Interprofessional Teamwork
1. Able to build collaborative relationships with colleagues representing diverse backgrounds and viewpoints, with the ability to negotiate and manage conflict.
2. Works effectively within a team structure comprised of individuals from different disciplines with shared values in order to provide an integrated and cohesive approach to problem solving and patient care.

iii. Problem Solving
1. Exercises sound reasoning to analyze issues, make decisions, and overcome problems.
2. Obtains, interprets, and uses knowledge, facts, and data in this process, and may demonstrate originality and inventiveness.
3. Able to generate new ideas and creative thoughts.

iv. Leadership
1. Demonstrates personal accountability and effective work habits, e.g., punctuality, working productively with others, and time workload management, and understands the impact of non-verbal communication on professional work image.
2. Strong commitment to integrity and ethical behavior, acts responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind, and is able to learn from his/her mistakes.
3. Leverages the strengths of others to achieve common goals and use interpersonal skills to coach and develop others.
4. Able to assess and manage his/her emotions and those of others, use empathetic skills to guide and motivate, and organize, prioritize, and delegate work.

v. Resiliency
1. Adapts well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress.
2. Adept at mentally and emotionally managing crisis situations and able to quickly “bounce back” from difficult experiences such as family and relationship problems, serious health problems, academic difficulties and/or financial stressors.
vi. Intercultural Fluency
   1. Values, respects, and learns from diverse cultures, races, ages, genders, sexual orientations, and religions.
   2. Demonstrates an openness, inclusiveness, sensitivity, and the ability to interact respectfully with all people and understand individuals’ differences.

b. Role of SACSCOC Accreditation
   
i. Standard 7.1 - The institution engages in ongoing, comprehensive, and integrated research-based planning and evaluation processes that (a) focus on institutional quality and effectiveness and (b) incorporate a systematic review of institutional goals and outcomes consistent with its mission.
   
ii. Standard 7.2 - The institution has a Quality Enhancement Plan that (a) has a topic identified through its ongoing, comprehensive planning and evaluation processes; (b) has broad-based support of institutional constituencies; (c) focuses on improving specific student learning outcomes and/or student success; (d) commits resources to initiate, implement, and complete the QEP; and (e) includes a plan to assess achievement.
   
iii. Standard 7.3 - The institution identifies expected outcomes of its administrative support services and demonstrates the extent to which the outcomes are achieved.
   
iv. Standard 8.1 - The institution identifies, evaluates, and publishes goals and outcomes for student achievement appropriate to the institution’s mission, the nature of the students it serves, and the kinds of programs offered. The institution uses multiple measures to document student success.
   
v. Standard 8.2 - The institution identifies expected outcomes, assesses the extent to which it achieves these outcomes, and provides evidence of seeking improvement based on analysis of the results in the areas below:
   a. Student learning outcomes for each of its educational programs.  
      (Student outcomes: educational programs)
   b. Student learning outcomes for collegiate-level general education competencies of its undergraduate degree programs.  
      (Student outcomes: general education)
   c. Academic and student services that support student success.  
      (Student outcomes: academic and student services)
   
vi. 9.1 - Educational programs (a) embody a coherent course of study, (b) are compatible with the stated mission and goals, and (c) are based upon fields of study appropriate to higher education.
### V. Participants – Roles and Responsibilities

Table 1. Distribution of Tasks in the Assessment System

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Approving Courses / Programs, Including their assessment</th>
<th>Supporting / Coaching / Departments and Programs in Assessment</th>
<th>Monitoring Effectiveness of Assessment Systems</th>
<th>Aggregating / Analyzing / Disseminating Assessment Data</th>
<th>Recommending Action Based on Data</th>
<th>Keeping Records, Writing Reports</th>
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<tr>
<td>Provost</td>
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<td>Programs</td>
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<td>University Assessment Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Academic Program Review Committee</td>
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<td>Division of Academic Innovation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional Development</td>
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Appendix A – Assessment Framework Glossary

- **Assessment** – A measure of what an individual knows or can do (Banta & Palomba, 2014).
- **Outcomes Assessment** –
  - Aggregating individual measures for the purpose of discovering group strengths and weaknesses that can guide improvement actions (Banta & Palomba, 2014).
  - The systematic collection, review, and use of information about educational programs undertaken for the purpose of improving student learning and development (Banta & Palomba, 2014).
- **Institutional Research** – Institutional research as a set of activities that support institutional planning, policy formation, and decision making. Institutional researchers and IR functions are embedded in the offices of strategic planning, institutional management, assessment, evaluation, budget analysis, enrollment management, enrollment research, and planning. (Volkwein, 2008)
- **Institutional Effectiveness** – Institutional effectiveness is the systematic, explicit, and documented process of measuring performance against mission in all aspects of an institution. (Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges, 2018)
  - Process of providing credible evidence of resources, implementation actions, and outcomes undertaken for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of instruction, programs, and services in higher education. (Banta & Palomba, 2014)
  - Institutional Effectiveness includes three areas: Assessment, Accreditation, and Accountability. (Head, 2008) and IR.
  - An *institutional planning and effectiveness* process involves all programs, services and constituencies; is linked to the decision-making process at all levels; and provides a sound basis for budgetary decisions, and resource allocations. (SACSCOC 7.1, 7.3)
- **Learning Outcomes** - Student learning outcomes statements clearly state the expected knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, and habits of mind that students are expected to acquire from an educational experience. Transparent student learning outcomes statements are:
  - Specific to institution-level and/or program-level
  - Clearly expressed and understandable by multiple audiences
  - Prominently posted or linked to multiple places across the website
  - Updated regularly to reflect current outcomes
  - Receptive to feedback or comments on the quality and utility of the information provided
  (NILOA -https://www.learningoutcomesassessment.org/ourwork/transparency-framework/components/student-learning-outcomes-statements/)
- **ILO:** *Institutional Learning Outcome*: what we want graduates of HSC to know, do, and value.
- **PLO:** *Program Learning Outcome*: what we want students to know, do, or value at the completion of their academic program or interaction with an organizational unit.
• **SLO: Student Learning Outcome**: what we want students to know, do, or value at the completion of the course or other learning experience.

a. Academic Program - A degree or academic certificate
b. Unit – A department that contributes to the overall success of the student through direct or indirect means.
c. Learning Outcomes - Student learning outcomes statements clearly state the expected knowledge, skills, attitudes, competencies, and habits of mind that students are expected to acquire from an educational experience. Transparent student learning outcomes statements are:
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